

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 AID-05 PC-01 IO-10 /073 W

----- 116131

O R 212030Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3533

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

DIA/DOD WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 7681

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: MRS. PERON CHANGES COURSE

REF: A. BA 7535, B. BA 7574 AND C. BA 6914

1. SUMMARY. JUST WHEN MRS. PERON APPEARED TO BE REACHING POINT OF NO RETURN, SHE CHANGED COURSE. SO FAR, THIS APPEARS TO BE TACTICAL SHIFT WITH VIEW TO BUYING TIME. THAT SHE HAS SET ELECTIONS FORWARD AND THAT SHE HAS EMBRACED INTERIOR MIN ROBLEDO RATHER THAN FIRING HIM HAVE DIVERTED MOMENTUM AGAINST HER--AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. BASICALLY, HOWEVER, SITUATION REMAINS UNCHANGED. GOVT IS STILL VIRTUALLY PARALYZED, AND POWER VACUUM REMAINS UNFILLED. MORE MEANINGFUL REMEDIAL STEPS THAN TAKEN SO FAR WILL BE REQUIRED IF GOVT'S PROSPECTS ARE REALLY TO BE IMPROVED. END SUMMARY.

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2. UP UNTIL NOV 17 MRS. PERON HAD FOR SOME TIME AVOIDED ALMOST

ALL CONTACT WITH HER CABINET MINISTERS AND ON NOV 14 HAD REFUSED TO RECEICE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PERONIST PARTY (SEE REF A). SHE SEEMED TO BE DRAWING INTO A SHELL GUARDED EXCLUSIVELY BY HER PRIVATE SECRETARY, JULIO GONZALEZ, AND HIS COHORTS. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE, MOREOVER, THAT GONZALEZ, WHO REPRESENTS THE DIE-HARD LOPEZREGUISTA FORCES, WAS DETERMINED TO DESTROY ROBLEDO. LAST WEEK ROBLEDO SEEMED ON THE WAY OUT. HAD HE IN FACT BEEN FIRED THAT MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN THE FINAL STRAW THAT WOULD HAVE GALVANIZED THE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OPPOSITION TO MOVE AGAINST MRS. PERON. THE UCR STATEMENT ON NOV. 17, FOR EXAMPLE, CERTAINLY SUGGESTED THAT THE LATTER HAD REACHED THE POINT OF DEMANDING IMMEDIATE ACTION AGAINST HER (SEE FBIS ACCOUNT).

3. AT ELEVENTH HOUR, MRS. PERON, REPORTEDLY ADVISED BY RAUL LASTIRI (RETURNED FROM THE POLITICAL GRAVE, AS IT WERE), SAVED HERSELF. SHE CAME OUT OF HER SHELL AND ADOPTED A MORE CONCILIATORY POSTURE. ON THE EVENING OF NOV 17 SHE PRESIDED OVER A CABINET MEETING, INDICATED FULL CONFIDENCE IN ALL HER MINISTERS AND MADE DECISION TO SEND TO CONGRESS MEASURE SETTING ELECTIONS FORWARD TO THIRD QUARTER OF NEXT YEAR--I.E. TO OCT OR NOV OF 1976, RATHER THAN MARCH 1977 (SEE REF B). FOLLOWING DAY (NOV 18), SHE RECEIVED MEMBERS OF NATIONAL COUNCIL, ACCOMPANIED BY LORENZO MIGUEL, AND SINGLED OUT INTERIOR MIN ROBLEDO FOR SPECIAL ATTENTION AND PRAISE. RODOLFO ARCE, WHO HAD LAST WEEK ATTACKED ROBLEDO, WAS FORCED TO APOLOGIZE. EFFECT OF ALL THIS WAS TO REVERSE ROLES OF ROBLEDO AND GONZALEZ. ON MONDAY MORNING, ROBLEDO SEEMED VERY MUCH ON WAY OUT AND GONZALEZ FIRMLY IN PLACE. BY TUESDAY NIGHT, REVERSE WAS THE CASE. NATIONAL COUNCIL, OBVIOUSLY RESENTFUL OF HIGH-HANDED WAY IN WHICH HE HAD TREATED THEM RECENTLY, HAVE CALLED ON MRS. PERON TO FIRE GONZALEZ, AND WHILE SHE SO FAR GIVES NO EVIDENCE OF INTENTION TO DO SO, HIS POWERS HAVE OBVIOUSLY BEEN CURTAILED.

4. LASTIRI'S ADVISE, IF SUCH IT WAS, WAS WELL-TAKEN. ROBLEDO IS THE ONE MAN IN HER ENTOURAGE IN WHOM ALL SIDES STILL HAVE SOME CONFIDENCE. HAD SHE FIRED HIM, SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN LEFT WITH NO VIABLE ALLIES AND WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BROUGHT SITUATION TO CONFIDENTIAL

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A CLIMAX. BY TURNING TO HIM AND SEEMING TO EMPHASIZE HIS POSITION, SHE HAS STAYED HAND OF THOSE WHO WANTED TO OUST HER THIS WEEK. THEY ARE NOW LIKELY TO WAIT AND SEE.

5. ROBLEDO AND NATIONAL COUNCIL ARE SEEKING TO MAXIMIZE EFFECTS OF MRS. PERON'S LAST-MINUTE SHIFT BY SPREADING WORD THAT ITS FINAL IMPLICATIONS ARE THAT FROM NOW ON IT IS PERONISMO AND NOT JUST MRS. PERON THAT IS GOVERNING COUNTRY.

PICTURES OF MRS. PERON TOGETHER WITH ROBLEDO, LORENZO MIGUEL, BAEZ AND REST OF NATIONAL COUNCIL, ARE CLEARLY MEANT TO GIVE IMPRESSION THAT PERONISMO IS ONCE AGAIN UNITED. AND, INDEED, FOR FIRST TIME IN MANY MONTHS, CABINET, NATIONAL COUNCIL AND 62 ORGANIZATIONS SEEM TO BE PULLING TOGETHER IN SAME DIRECTION. ROBLEDO IS EVEN GIVING ASSURANCES CONCERNING MRS. PERON'S HEALTH. WHEN NOV 19 EDITION OF MAYORIA RAN EDITORIAL SUGGESTING THAT PANEL OF DOCTORS SHOULD DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT PRESIDENT FIT TO CONTINUE IN OFFICE, ROBLEDO IMMEDIATELY REPLIED (SEE FBIS ACCOUNT OF PRESS CONFERENCE) THAT THIS UNNECESSARY AND THAT SHE WOULD BE BACK ON JOB AT CASA ROSADA NEXT WEEK AT LATEST. THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE IN CONTRAST WITH EARLIER REPORTS (CONFIRMED) THAT HE HAD PROMISED SENATE LEADERS TO PERSUADE HER TO RESIGN OR TAKE LEAVE OF ABSENCE, BUT, IN FACT, SPECULATION IS ALREADY SURFACING THAT ROBLEDO, FROM NEW POSITION OF STRENGTH, WILL PERSUADE MRS. PERON TO GO ON LEAVE OF ABSENCE SOON. SAME SPECULATION, HOWEVER, INDICATES THAT HE DOES NOT WANT HER TO LEAVE UNDER CLOUD; RATHER, SHE SHOULD RETURN TO WORK FOR A SHORT TIME, REFURBISH HER IMAGE, AND THEN GO ON LEAVE. SO FAR, THIS IS NO MORE THAN SPECULATION, BUT CLEARLY ROBLEDO IS BEGINNING TO PLAY SAME RECORD HE HAD CUT JUST BEFORE MRS. PERON'S OCT 17 RETURN-- I.E. THAT HE CAN CONTROL HER, THAT FROM NOW ON GOVT WILL BE HONEST AND EFFECTIVE AND THAT ALL WILL BE WELL (SEE REF C). AS WAS THE CASE WITH RESPECT TO EARLIER ASSURANCES, MOST OBSERVERS HAVE DOUBTS THAT ROBLEDO CAN DELIVER. HIS ASSURANCES MAY BE SINCERE, BUT THEY MAY ALSO BE QUIXOTIC.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 7681

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

6. MEANWHILE, LINES ARE BLURRED AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE WHO IS LINING UP WITH WHOM. A MONTH AGO, LORENZO MIGUEL AND ROBLEDO WERE BITTER RIVALS. TODAY THEY ARE ALLIES--OR ARE THEY? ROBLEDO IS FIRST VICE PRES OF NATIONAL COUNCIL AND LATTWR HAS CALLED ON MRS. PERON TO INTERVENE BUENOS AIRES PROVINCE, THUS OUSTING DISSIDENT PERONIST LEADER VIXTORIO CALABRO FROM HIS STRONGHOLD OF POWER. DOUBTLESS LORENZO MIGUEL WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO SEE THIS DONE. ROBLEDO, ON OTHER HAND, HAS GIVEN UCR ASSURANCES THAT PROVINCE WILL NOT RPT NOT BE INTERVENED AND CALABRO FORCES HAVE TOLD EMBOFFS PRIVATELY THAT ROBLEDO HIMSELF HAS HELD OUT OLIVE BRANCH TO CALABRO. HOW THEN DOES ROBLEDO FIT INTO COUNCIL'S DEMAND? FURTHER, WHILE ROBLEDO AND OTHER VERTICALISTAS ARE ATTEMPTING TO PORTRAY MRS. PERON'S SHIFT AS VICTORY FOR "SANE" PERONISTS AND FOR CONSTITUTIONALISM, FACT IS THAT AT SAME TIME MRS. PERON CALLED FOR ADVANCEMENT OF ELECTIONS, SHE ALSO SENT CONFIDENTIAL

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MESSAGE TO CONGRESS TRYING TO BLOCK INVESTIGATION OF CORRUPTION IN EXECUTIVE BRANCH. THIS EFFORT AT COVERUP MAY WELL FAIL, AND EVEN IF IT DOES NOT, INVESTIGATION OF CORRUPTION WILL CONTINUE IN ANOTHER FORM. AWARE THAT THEY CANNOT DAM THE TIDE, ROBLEDO, BAEZ AND OTHERS NOW SEEM INTENT ON DIVERTING IT. THEY APPARENTLY HOPE THAT THEY CAN PUT BLAME ON LOPEZ REGA AND HIS COHORTS BUT LEAVE MRS. PERON OUT OF IT (SEE SEPTTEL). THIS, HOWEVER, IS NOT LIKELY TO WORK.

7. IN FINAL ANALYSIS, THEN, MRS. PERON'S SHIFT HAS NOT YET CHANGED ANY OF THE BASIC FACTORS OF THE EXISTING SITUATION. AS EMBASSY HAS INDICATED BEFORE (PERHAPS AD NAUSEAM), VACUUM EXISTS IN EXECUTIVE BRANCH WHICH MRS. PERON CANNOT FILL. IF SHE WOULD IN FACT GIVE ROBLEDO AND OTHER ACCEPTABLE PERONISTS A CHANCE TO FILL IT, SITUATION MIGHT INDEED BE ALTERED IN FAVORABLE DIRECTION. THIS, HOWEVER, WOULD IMPLY INCREASINGLY TURNING OVER REAL POWER AND DECISION MAKING TO OTHERS WHILE HERSELF WITHDRAWING TO A FIGUREHEAD ROLE. LA OPINION'S HERIBERTO KAHN THIS MORNING SPECULATED THAT IF CABINET, NATIONAL COUNCIL AND

UNION LEADERSHIP (READ, LORENZO MIGUEL) COULD ALL WORK
TOGETHER IN HARMONY OVER LONG HAUL, THEY MIGHT FILL VACUUM
WHICH HAS YAWNED SINCE JULY. BUT THIS WOULD IMPLY THAT
MRS. PERON WILL IN FACT MOVE ASIDE TO ALLOW IT BE FILLED,
AND FURTHER, THAT PRESENT HARMONY IS MORE THAN EPHIMERAL
PHENOMENON. THERE ARE FEW GROUNDS YET FOR SUCH OPTIMISM.
EVEN KAHN, WHO WROTE PIECE, PRIVATELY COMMENTED TO EMBOFFS
THAT WHILE IT IS A GOOD TRY ON ROBLEDO'S PART, HE (KAHN)
"DOESN'T BELIEVE IT WILL WORK." MEANWHILE, MILITARY ARE
SITTING BACK TO SEE WHAT MRS. PERON WILL DO NEXT.
MONTLLOR

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